

THE TIME OF THY VISITATION.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.'" – Luke 19:41-44.

THE Lord's earthly ministry was fast nearing its close, as also was the time of Israel's special favor. To Israel first was the gospel of the new dispensation preached; and the privilege of preparing to enter the spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God was being withheld from the Gentiles to fulfil the promise of God to their fathers, that his special favor should be to them first – "to the Jew *first*, and *afterward* to the Gentile." – Luke 24:46,47; Acts 13:46; 3:26.

In fulfilment of his promise God had greatly favored Israel, but chiefly in that to them were committed the oracles of God – the law and the testimony of God. (Rom. 3:2.) And by and by he sent to them prophets and wise men to remind them of their privileges and obligations, that at the appointed time they might be found worthy to enter into their inheritance. But they heeded not the prophets (Matt. 23:37), and so, last of all, God sent his Son. (Matt. 21:33-46.) And now, for three and a half years, the Son of God himself had been preaching to them the gospel of the Kingdom. But neither did they reverence his Son. They not only despised his teaching, but they also hated and reviled him, and were continually plotting against his life.

In the midst of all this ingratitude and wickedness God had patiently borne with Israel, but now the time of retribution was close at hand. As a nation they had so [R1846 : page 179] hardened their hearts

by continued perversity that, although according to the promises they were looking for and expecting the Messiah about that time, they were nevertheless unable to discern "the time of their visitation." The Messiah had come – born a Jew, of the lineage of David; his advent was announced by angel messengers with heavenly anthems of praise and benedictions; his anointing likewise received the divine testimony from heaven – "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." His claims and his teaching had received the most marked seal of divine approval and endorsement in the testimony of numerous and very public miracles, and his personal character and demeanor were such as to command the most profound respect and reverence of all men, even his enemies bearing witness to the grandeur of his character. "Never man spake like this man," said the officers who were sent to arrest him, but who could not, being overawed by the majesty of his presence. Many of the people said, "Of a truth this is the prophet." "Others said, This is the Christ. ...When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" And when Pilate thought to subdue the people when they clamored for his death, he brought him forth and said, "Behold the man!" – Should a man like that die? "I find no fault in him."

Alas! so hard-hearted and consequently so blind had this people become, that they not only failed to recognize the time of their visitation, but they also conspired against the Lord to slay him. "He came unto his own and his own received him not;" he did "among them the works which none other man did," but they heeded not their testimony; "the light shined in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not;" the table of God's rich bounty was spread for them in vain, and because of their hardness of heart it became unto them "a snare and a trap."

It was in view of this dreadful condition of heart which prevailed throughout the nation, and of the national crime which was even then contemplated and which should so soon be perpetrated by his people – "his own people" according to the flesh – and of the fearful retribution they were about to precipitate upon themselves, that Jesus wept over

them and uttered the plaintive lamentation of our text, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace."

These words were not the demonstration of a merely selfish patriotism for his own nation according to the flesh, but the deep solicitude of a noble heart which grieved for a nation that failed so sadly to realize both its privileges and its degradation, and which therefore must soon receive the fearful visitation of divine wrath.

Just here it will be profitable to note what constitutes a national sin, as illustrated in Israel. Their great national sin was the rejection and crucifixion of the anointed Son of God. On the part of the minority of the nation – the rulers and recognized teachers – the sin was *active*: they plotted and planned; they sought to catch him in his words and in some way to so entangle him as to find a legal cause against him; at different times they specially commissioned hirelings to arrest him; and finally they violently and publicly instigated an excited and clamorous mob against him. But on the part of the majority of the people the sin was *passive*, both in the rejection and in the crucifixion. They weakly failed to exercise their right of private judgment, and although often they heard him gladly, and hung upon his words, and said, Of a truth this must be the Christ, and on one occasion were even constrained to take him by force and make him their king, nevertheless they failed to act on their own convictions and dependently inquired, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" They blindly submitted to their erring and blind leaders, and both together fell into the ditch. Thus the whole nation, except the remnant that believed, were either *actively* or *passively* involved in the great sin of the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord.

There is a most potent lesson here for those weak and ignoble characters which think to shirk responsibility by indifference and passive acquiescence with popular errors. Both the active and the passive of the nation of Israel suffered alike the penalty of their national crime; for that which the Lord in the above words foretold soon came

to pass. The siege of Jerusalem was one of the most appalling calamities. Their enemies stormed the city from without, cut off their supplies of food and drove them to all the horrors of famine, when parents actually killed and ate their own children; and added to all this were the terrors of civil war: every man's hand was against his neighbor. The punishment inflicted upon the nation extended, not only to the inhabitants of the capital city, but to the whole people, driving them out of their own land and scattering them as fugitives among all nations, never again to be reinstated until their King should come "a second time without a sin-offering unto salvation;" when their blindness shall be turned away and they shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But not until the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come into possession of the Kingdom which was first offered to, but was rejected by, them shall their blindness be turned away. The forfeiture of this chief favor, together with the calamities and persecution they have suffered ever since, is their national penalty.

There is something touchingly beautiful in this expression **[R1847 : page 179]** of the Lord's sympathy for the blind and erring. What moral grandeur is this that could so triumph over vindictiveness and hate! What dignity and grace and glory! Lord, help thy children to "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself;" "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously;" who seemed to forget the sting of persecution against himself in his deep sorrow and pity for the blindness and moral degradation of his persecutors.

Hear him again: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto **[R1847 : page 180]** thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." How long the Lord waited to be gracious, how slow was he to

wrath, and how plenteous in mercy! But, nevertheless, the reckoning day must come and the harvest of an evil sowing must be reaped.

"If thou hadst known," O Israel, "the things that belong unto thy peace," how different would have been the consequences! But while we consider these words, we call to mind the fact that in all these things fleshly Israel was typical* of the whole nominal gospel church – "Christendom" – and see that these words of lamentation over their stumbling and fall apply with equal force, as the prophets also indicated, to Christendom – the nominal spiritual Israel, which, at this parallel point of time, the harvest of this age, similarly fails to recognize the time of her visitation, and which, in consequence, is about to precipitate upon herself "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation" – a trouble, therefore, even greater than that which befell fleshly Israel; and justly so, for her privileges and opportunities have been a thousand times greater.

See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. II., Chap. vii.

Again, therefore, we seem to hear the Master's voice saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace." What things belong unto the peace of God's professedly consecrated people? It is nothing short of the fullest acceptance of Christ and his teachings, and obedience to them; for not the forgetful hearers, but the doers of the word are blessed. Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things needful will be added.

We rejoice to know that even as in the Jewish harvest there was a remnant who did know and follow the things that belonged to their peace, and who therefore received the end of their faith as joint-inheritors with the Lord of his Kingdom and glory, so now also there is a believing and faithful remnant out of nominal spiritual Israel which discerns the time of her visitation. Yes, some of us have learned the things that belong unto our peace; and consequently, in the midst of the threatened dangers and commotion that even now begin to distress

Christendom in every department of its life – civil, social, financial and religious – the peace of God, which passeth the understanding of all those who do not possess it, keeps our hearts.

Praise the Lord for his keeping power! His truth is our shield and buckler; and beyond the tempest which, according to the sure word of prophecy, we know must soon come, we see the glory of the established Kingdom – the Kingdom of light and peace. As the Lord said to his early disciples, so now he says to us, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears; for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them;" for verily the Master himself hath caused us to sit down to meat and hath come forth and served us, according to his promise.

Meanwhile all the elements of strife and discord which shall eventuate in the predicted and unparalleled trouble are in active operation; and, as the time approaches, the distress of nations, and of individuals as well, rapidly increases. In our view of the civil, social, financial and religious situation of Christendom to-day, we have called attention to some of these things, and our readers, we trust, are sufficiently awake to the signs of the times to note many more.

In religion, as vital godliness has declined, the forms of godliness have multiplied, and the people mistake the show for reality. Disregarding their right and duty of private judgment, they blindly follow their blind leaders, as did their Jewish prototypes; and, like them, they are also destined ere long to stumble into the ditch together. Now, as then, the harvest message comes through unexpected and unpretentious channels, and the masses of professed Christians, who fail to rightly estimate their personal responsibility and weakly lean upon their leaders, ignobly surrender their personal liberty and inquire, Have any of the priests or reverend doctors of divinity or theological professors, etc., believed on him? thinking thereby also to shirk their own personal responsibility. But their *passive* submission to the popular

current, which is strongly set against the Lord and his truth, the *active* agents in which are the very priests and reverend doctors and theological professors to whom they look, all heedless of the Prophet's warning (Isa. 28:7,8; 29:11,12), will no more shield them from personal responsibility and from the impending trouble than did such passive submission shield the masses of fleshly Israel from the tribulation that involved them all, leaders and followers alike.

Such being the religious condition in Christendom, it is no matter of surprise that political, social and financial conditions are influenced by it. The great increase of light on all subjects, incident to this "day of preparation" for the great change of dispensation, has quickened thought and activity in every direction, and the listless, sleepy, pleasure-loving Church, intoxicated with the spirit of the world (Isa. 28:7), has been unable to help men to realize the true import of all these things; it has failed to center the attention of the people upon Christ and his coming kingdom and the signs of its approach, or to win their hearts to him and his blessed law of love and justice. Consequently strife, selfish ambition and general discontent and unrest prevail everywhere, and the dire results are felt in social, political and financial circles to such an extent that great fear of impending catastrophe is more and more taking hold upon all minds.

How rapidly events are marching toward the predicted culmination! Let those whose anointed eyes behold with joy the providence of God in permitting the adverse winds to rise and then controlling them so as to make them eventually work out his own good purposes, rejoice; yet rejoice with trembling, for neither have we yet reached the goal nor stood all the tests of faithfulness and endurance which must *prove* our worthiness to enter in to the final joy of our Lord. Let us be sober, and watch unto prayer.
